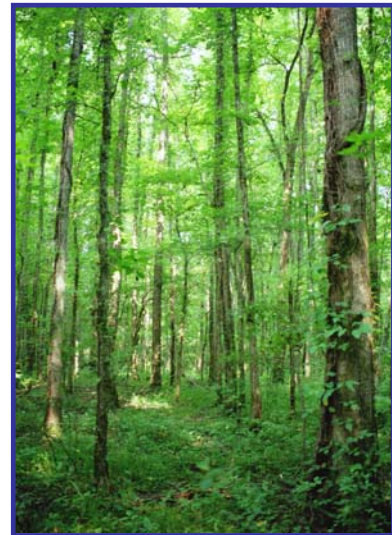


Banking on Redstone's Wetlands

Redstone's environmental office works to minimize impacts to the many natural and cultural resources that are found on the installation. Sometimes, however, some impacts to the environment must be incurred in the name of progress. The city of Huntsville and Redstone Arsenal have grown up together and in doing so; have outgrown many of their roads. One such example is Martin Road, which is a major transportation artery that runs east-west through the Arsenal and is a two-lane road at either end. Over time, the traffic in and out of the east side of Redstone has become bottlenecked due to increasing use and thus making the widening of the road from two lanes to four lanes inevitable. The proposed widening will result in the loss of a little over five acres of the large wetland complex that surrounds Martin Road on the east side of the installation.



To mitigate for these losses, Redstone biologists developed a plan for a 52 acre mitigation bank on the south end of the installation. The area is a large channel scar where the Tennessee River once flowed before it eventually eroded the channel to the south that exists today. Prior to the 1930s, the basin supported tupelo swamps and bottomland hardwood forests. As part of their mosquito abatement program of the 30s and 40s, the Tennessee Valley Authority drained the area with a series of ditches which connect to the Tennessee River. The proposed mitigation plan will enhance approximately 24 acres of existing wetlands and create 28 acres of new wetlands with the construction of a dam in the main drainage channel. The enhancement will be comprised of the re-establishment of tupelo gum stands in the lower, more inundated areas. To create new wetlands, pastures and non-wetland forest types will be converted to bottomland forests by planting species such as overcup oak, water hickory, swamp white oak, cherry bark oak, and shagbark hickory.

Because the mitigation bank will provide far more credits than is required for the construction on Martin Road, it will benefit Redstone in a number of ways: it will provide mitigation credits for several important wetland types for future projects; it will reduce the overall cost per acre for small mitigation projects; and it will improve habitat for fish and wildlife populations. By restoring this wetland community to what it once was, both the Army mission and the environment can be preserved.

